Opening Statement of Republican Ranking Member
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Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations Virtual Hearing
"Power Struggle: Examining the 2021 Texas Grid Failure"
As Prepared for Delivery

INTRO

Thank you, Chair DeGette and Leader Griffith, for holding today's hearing to examine the impact of the recent power failure in Texas from the winter storm last month.

Thank you to the witnesses for bringing your expertise and advice towards solutions to this ongoing problem of weather-related power failures.

We hope no American will ever suffer harm, especially death, because of power failures.

I want to express my sorrow to all the families and friends who lost loved ones during this terrible event.

LOOKING BROADLY AT GRID RESILIENCY

There should be a full accounting of what went wrong with Texas's grid failures.

We have a good idea of generally what went wrong.

But we still lack the specifics of what caused the failures.

The freezing conditions and record winter power demand seen throughout Texas and the south-central U.S. were extremely rare.

For the sake of the nation's energy security, the Subcommittee should be looking at what happened in Texas, **and more broadly** at all issues that threaten the resiliency of the energy grid.

Recent trends show a transition away from coal and nuclear power plants, designed to function as baseload capacity, toward variable renewable energy sources with just-in-time natural gas back-up.

States like California that rely more on weather-dependent renewables, regularly experience energy failures.

Indeed, California residents experience blackouts on an ongoing, annual basis as the State fails to manage summer electricity demand and wildfire risks.

These events suggest that attempting to replace nuclear plants with variable renewable energy sources could make electricity grids less resilient.

Policies that drive renewables at the expense of firm baseload put lives at risk.

People are suffering not just from power loss from devastating storms but from frequent "public safety power shutoffs" to prevent wildfires from being started by electrical equipment during strong winds and dry weather.

Power failures interrupt healthcare, transportation, and impact public safety and the welfare of individuals, especially senior citizens and those with disabilities.

We should review events across the country with a sense of what our committee can do to support an all-hazards approach to power grid reliability and resilience.

DIVERSE ENERGY BASE

The recent crisis in Texas is a wake-up call.

While our country moves towards integrating renewables, integration must be achieved through diverse energy sources that include nuclear, hydropower, natural gas, clean coal, and wind and solar.

A resilient power grid is not a one-size fits all operation imposed by Washington . . . nor should it be.

Texas has the most integrated renewable energy sources of any state, but that still did not prevent the power failure.

The U.S. has reduced more greenhouse gas emissions than any other country over the last twenty years.

But this progress and the resiliency of our power grid will be put at risk without assuring the bulk energy supply and not overestimating the contribution of weather-dependent renewables.

Now some want to argue that Texas power failed in part because it runs its own power grid for about 85 percent of the state without being part of one of the two major interstate interconnections.

However, east Texas and other states that were part of an interconnection lost power anyway. It is not clear at all that the interconnections would have had much power to spare to curtail the Texas power failure.

HYDROPOWER CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE ACT

With that, I look forward to today's testimony and continuing the conversation with my colleagues about some legislative solutions.

As part of our Securing Cleaner American Energy Agenda, I have reintroduced the Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act to expand clean, renewable, reliable, and affordable hydropower production in America, as well as to promote the innovation of the next generation of hydroelectric technology.

If the U.S grows hydropower production from 101 gigawatts to nearly 150 gigawatts by the year 2050, that growth could save $209 billion in avoided greenhouse emissions according to the Department of Energy.

Reforms in the Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act will help the country achieve this goal and will create good-paying jobs that can ensure our transition to a cleaner energy future.

But hydropower is only one very important part of the total diverse energy mix that the United States must have to keep the lights on and keep our citizens safe.

Thank you. I yield back.